



# State of Wisconsin GOVERNOR'S STATE TRAILS COUNCIL

## Meeting Minutes

**Friday, August 7, 2015**

Riverview Town Hall  
15471 Highway 32  
Mountain, WI 54149  
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

### **State Trails Council Members present:**

Leif Hubbard, *Wisconsin Department of Transportation* [non-voting]  
Doug Johnson, snowmobiling representative (member of *Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs*)  
Mike McFadzen, cross-country skiing representative (member of *WI Nordic Network, Northern Kettle Moraine Nordic Ski Club*)  
Bryan Much, off-highway motorcycle representative (member of *Wisconsin Off-Highway Motorcycle Association*) [STC Chair]  
Ken Neitzke, hiking representative (member of *Ice Age Trail Alliance*)  
Luana Schneider, 4-wheel drive vehicles representative (member of *Wisconsin 4-Wheel Drive Association*) [STC Secretary]  
John Siegert, off-road bicycling representative (member of *Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin*) [STC Vice Chair]  
Jim White, boards and small wheels representative

### **State Trails Council Members not in attendance**

Randy Harden, ATV/UTV representative (member of *Wisconsin ATV-UTV Association*)  
Skip Maletzke, tourism/business representative [non-voting]  
Phil Johnsrud, non-motorized water trails representative  
Robbie Webber, bicycling representative (member of *Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin*)  
Ken Carpenter, equestrian representative

### **Invited speakers**

Paul Ehrfurth, (*Oconto County Economic Development Corporation*)  
Dale Mayo, (*Vilas County Forestry, Recreation, and Land Department*)  
Beth Castaldi, (*Langlade County Sled Dog Club*)

### **Others present**

Judy Peterson, (snowmobiling/biking)  
Dave Peterson, (snowmobiling/biking)  
Karen McFadzen  
Robert Skalitzy, (*Oconto County Forestry Department Administrator*)  
Ken Castaldi, (dog powered sports)

### **WI DNR Staff present:**

Aaron Buchholz, Kelly Raleigh-Moses, Brigit Brown, Daniel Buckler

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### **10:03 A.M. – Welcome and introductions**

- Much called the meeting to order. Members and guests introduced themselves.



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### **10:04 A.M. – Agenda review/repair and approval of April meeting minutes**

- Much noted that Dave Ziolkowski, Forest County Forestry and Parks Department administrator, and Terry Coplien of the Wisconsin ATV-UTV Association, were not able to attend the meeting, as planned.
- McFadzen moved to approve the April minutes. Johnson seconded. Motion passed.

### **10:06 A.M. – Nomination of 2016 officers**

- Brown announced that nominations for 2016 officers are open and need to be made by the middle of October. The officer positions of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary are all open. Schneider nominated Much as Chair. Much accepted the nomination. McFadzen suggested that, if current slate of officers accepted the nomination for 2016, that they could be nominated as an entire slate. McFadzen moved that the current 2015 slate of officers is nominated in the same capacities for 2016. White seconded. Motion passed.
- Other nominations will be accepted through mid-October. Brown will send out a reminder email.

### **10:15 A.M. – Chair Report and pending issues**

- Much brought an article about bicycle conflicts on the Bugline Trail to illustrate that trail conflicts can occur even in the same user group. Neitzke provided some context for that trail and conflict.
- Brown noted that the DNR is working on a Burma Shave style signage project to remind trail users about proper trail etiquette. Brown said that trail signage for yielding is an issue that might be good for the STC to address.

### **10:20 A.M. – November meeting location, agenda items**

- Much said that a November meeting location needs to be found in the next few months and the agenda is currently open. He will send out an early call for agenda items in October.

### **10:23 A.M. – Update on road inventory project**

- Buchholz reviewed [Wisconsin Statute 23.116](#), which prompted the DNR's [road inventory project](#). He noted that the original statute was not part of the recently passed 2015-17 state Budget, but rather the earlier, 2013-15 Budget.
- Project goals of the road inventory include: developing a database of DNR roads; increasing opportunities for motorized access on DNR properties where appropriate; creating maps for each property that depict roads open for public motorized use; showing the seasonality of public use of roads, planned development level of the roads, and types of motorized vehicles allowed.
- Siegert asked why there was an emphasis on motorized use. Buchholz responded that it is because that is what the statute says, and he further stated that the statute is about roads, not trails.
- Buchholz reviewed the implementation process consisting of: developing a comprehensive road inventory system for department roads; developing road access criteria to determine openings and closures; facilitating a public involvement process to evaluate roads that will be open for public use; and, producing maps identifying roads open for public use. The [Public Access Lands Atlas](#) is where the finished road inventory product will exist.
- Buchholz went over the next steps in the project. These include: reviewing comments from the recently closed 21-day public review and comment period; finalizing guidance following review; implementing guidance in master plans and other access planning efforts; initiating inventory at properties; and, beginning map production for properties with completed access plans.
- Schneider asked for clarification on "two track". Buchholz said that the symbology of the maps will show different kinds of roads and define those road types.
- Buchholz noted that the priority will probably be on properties entering a master planning process and that there will be a public review on those processes.



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- Buchholz reviewed some of the statistics on the public comment period that just closed. There were 250 comments, most very against or very supportive of “expanding motorized use”. There were 26 comments specifically about guidance for how the DNR would evaluate motorized road access. There were 11 comments internally submitted within the DNR and information was submitted from six states. Buchholz then listed a number of environmental and recreational organizations which submitted comments on the guidance. Relevant comments will be incorporated in a new review, hopefully coming out in September.
- Buchholz took multiple questions from the Council. Responses to the Council stated that the inventorying will show current conditions and not future uses, and that road classifications will be accomplished on a property-by-property basis after each property goes through a process which includes public review.

### 10:53 A.M. -- State Trails Council member reports

- *Department of Transportation.* Hubbard had no report.
- *Cross-Country Skiing.* McFadzen said that coaching and skier development clinics are active right now, even without any snow. “Nordic Rocks”, a campaign to encourage skiing in K through 6<sup>th</sup> grade children, is expanding its program and influence. The program is a partnership between schools, communities and Central Cross Country Skiing (CXC), the regional governing body for cross country skiing. CXC also has an adaptive skiing program which enables disabled people to get onto snow, including veterans from the Iraqi and Afghani wars. Some of the top skiers advance to the Winter Paralympics level. Becker Law Office has built a lot of sit skis for this purpose, some of which were given to state parks. Green Bay is expanding its cross-country ski program with plans to enhance coaching and light 3 km of trails. Bay Nordic is taking the leadership role on this project. McFadzen also noted that Paul Sandgren, the superintendent of Kettle Moraine State Forest – Southern Unit, was ill. He remarked on how highly respected Sandgren is and noted the big impact he has had on the KMSF-SU and on other properties. McFadzen encouraged people to reach out to Sandgren.
- *4-Wheel Drive Vehicles.* Schneider reported that the Jeep Jamboree was held in July. The Wisconsin Off-Highway Vehicle Association has its Great Northern Trail Ride in August. She noted that recently she has noticed folks joining 4WD clubs from other user groups, stating that their previous activities are too hard on their bodies. She added that several families and others, of course, also join. She said now that the budget has been passed, the four wheel drive vehicle legislation push should be started again.
- *Snowmobiles.* Johnson said that the World Championships in snowmobile water riding was in Wisconsin last month. In the late summer and early fall, a lot of snowmobile users do grass drags on hay fields or other prepared areas. In September is Hay Days in Minnesota, one of the biggest snowmobile events in the world, usually attended by 30,000 – 40,000 people. At the beginning of October, one of the largest grass drags in the state is held in Wausau. As always, landowner appreciation events are held throughout the year. Snowmobile trail pass legislation went into effect July 1. Whether owned by resident or not, it is now required to display trail pass. A pass is \$30/year for residents, unless you belong to a snowmobile club. That price is \$10, as long as the club is approved by the Association of Wisconsin Snowmobile Clubs. AWSC has processed 2,500 trail passes since July 1. The third Celebrate Wisconsin snowmobile event will be February 2016.
- *Water.* Brown noted that Buckler produced the [Lake Michigan State Water Trail mapping application](#).



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- *ATVs.* Brown said that provisions in the budget eliminated some capacity grants to conservation and recreation organizations. One of the groups to lose this funding was the Wisconsin ATV-UTV Association. There will be a World Championship side x side UTV/ATV derby in Eagle River this August.
- *Hiking/Walking.* There will be five miles of North Country Trail worked on at Copper Falls this September and October. This year the Ice Age Trail Alliance has only five mobile skills outings due to lack of funding. The Ice Age Trail was hit hard by the budget, particularly with the loss of \$75,000 a year in DNR capacity grants. National Trails Day was the first weekend in June. The celebration initially was formed to promote hiking trails, but this year it incorporated other non-motorized users.
- *Boards/small wheels.* White had no report.
- *Mountain biking.* Siegert reported that the Chippewa Off Road Bike Association (CORBA) hosted a Subaru/IMBA trail building crew. They had been working on a project in the Rice Lake area. CORBA also hosted a four-day sustainable trail building training in June.
- *Off-Highway Motorcycles.* Much said that a big adventure motorcycle ride was starting in Vilas County that day that would range through the area, including the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, traveling on previously GPS'd paths. Before the big event rides, individuals or small groups map out obscure routes then coordinate with the land manager to make sure it would be appropriate and that no logging operations would be occurring.
- *Equestrians.* Cricket Jewett, a possible equestrian appointee to the STC, submitted comments. She said that user groups are discussing ways to step up and help out in their local parks. The Wisconsin Horse Council will be promoting trail use at Farm Technology Days held in Sun Prairie on Aug 25 – 27. The planners have included an entire section of equine related events, most of which will be trail riding, so the WHC plan to do some promotion there. In the last year or two, there has been a sharp increase in the number of tick borne illnesses in horses which include Lyme disease, Equine piroplasmiasis and Anaplasmosis, which has the industry doing some interesting research.

### **11:29 A.M. – In-progress review of potential statute change regarding Council role**

- Much discussed background to a potential statute change regarding the STC's advisory capacity. Other, newer councils have advisory authority beyond the department within which they were created. The question at hand was whether the STC, which is advisory only to the DNR, should attempt to expand their advisory authority.
- McFadzen provided more context, saying that this issue had been brought up multiple times over the years.
- Much stated that the Council makes recommendations to the DNR and that the Council's decisions are listed in the minutes and that the user groups can then take those minutes and themselves address the legislature, Governor or whomever they want to address. Much continued that there is so much difference between user groups that a collective voice through the STC is unrealistic and that a hypothetical vote of 6-5 on a resolution is unfair and would require detailed noting of dissent.
- Brown said that the DNR would not have an opinion.
- White asked about the successes of those other groups which have advisory authority to the legislature and Governor. Brown did not know of any direct impact they had.
- Multiple Council members asked Much about the Off Road Vehicle Council (ORV), which does have that expanded advisory capacity. Much said that it is strictly ATV/UTV and is funded by ATV/UTV registration funds. They make recommendations for grants from their own money. They thus have a lot narrower focus than the STC.



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- Siegert reviewed a few pros and cons and said that the resolution needing to list the dissenters and their reasons is not an issue. Brown said that indeed the STC used to list for, against and abstaining votes at the bottom of resolutions.
- McFadzen said that he does not see a compelling reason to seek statutory changes, particularly as they are a well-connected group and it would be best to work through their own user groups.
- White moved to not take any further steps for the statute change. Johnson seconded. Motion passed.

### **12:00 P.M. – Lunch**

### **12:32 P.M. – Briefing on trail improvement initiative by Paul Ehrfurth**

- Ehrfurth said that Oconto County has established a committee to bring trail users across the county to mitigate potential issues arising between the groups. It was formed under the auspices of the Oconto County Economic Development Corporation.
- Signage became a big issue for the trail user committee and they have worked successfully on that issue. They will put up 500 signs after the ATV season. Connectivity gaps are another issue that the trail user committee will be working on. There are gaps between trails and trail networks. Oconto County is a big county which is broken down into about three distinct regions.
- The committee meets monthly, with about 20 people attending.
- Another initiative is for the Mountain Fire Tower, which has been closed for a year. The U.S. Forest Service has not been able to renovate it because of lack of funds. The committee will be behind a crowd-sourcing mechanism to get that up and running, with possible interpretive signs added.
- Ehrfurth said that the key to success of the committee is that it is not driven by the county or the OCEDC. It is driven by the committee members. Because it is not under the auspices of an agency or department, it also did not have the requirements put on them that public groups would have.
- Brown encouraged Ehrfurth to work with the DNR and DOT on these issues. Kelly Raleigh-Moses could be their contact. Specifically, one thing is that Oconto County is part of the [Bikeways Project](#), but there has not been a lot of input from the county. However, during the previous public comment period, people mentioned that there was not a lot of good bicycling in the county, specifically around the Highway 41 / 141 intersection.
- Ehrfurth encouraged all counties and regional entities to create similar groups, as it has been a huge success in Oconto County.
- Bob Skalitzky of the Oconto County Forestry Department was present. He and his colleagues manage 44,000 acres of county forests. The forests are [dual certified](#) through the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative. Recreation is important to those audits.
- Oconto County has two state trails. The Nicolet State Trail is really popular for ATVs and snowmobiles. UTVs are very popular now, and in some areas seem even more popular than ATVs. The Oconto River State Trail has mostly snowmobile use.
- Skalitzky noted the big difference in snow across the whole county. Almost every year, the northern part goes into supplemental snowmobile funds, but sometimes the southern part barely opens their trails.
- Much asked that if there was a big activity on a trail, would they have to be permitted by the county? Skalitzky said that it generally has not been an issue. There have not been a lot of requests and as long as it is less than 50 people participating and is an approved trail use, then there probably would not be a need for a permit.

### **1:03 P.M. – Briefing on County sponsored trail user committee by Dale Mayo**

- Mayo said that Vilas County has a tourism-driven economy, and snowmobiles are a big part of this. The trail user committee started with snowmobilers. There had been an alcohol-involved snowmobile tragedy with a Chicago news anchor in Vilas County. Following the anchor's death, there was an exposé from Chicago showing bartenders giving snowmobilers shots of alcohol. Vilas County was



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always on the list of areas with the highest snowmobiler fatalities. One reason is that it is one of the most popular snowmobile counties in the state and country.

- Prompted by those fatality numbers, the county put together a snowmobile safety committee. Club representatives, public health officials, DNR staff, county board supervisors, and law enforcement officers were brought together. Until the committee was formed, there wasn't always effective communication between all of these parties.
- Because of the reoccurring problem of finding people on the trails, the safety committee put together a trail intersection signing system. They came up with three digit signing system and made it pretty simple for dispatchers to identify the area of concern. There was a lot of money and time invested into this system and all of the snowmobile clubs bought into this. They then wanted to incorporate other trail user groups.
- Vilas County put together an ad-hoc trail user committee, originally for one year, but now it is long term with an annual budget from the county of \$5,000. They address problems as they come up and look toward the future. An example of a project was a mobile billboard they worked on with the DNR. In the spring through fall, the billboard could be used for firefighting or other purposes, and in the winter, it could be dedicated toward snowmobiling. Vilas County also adopted a DNR poster with an anti-alcohol/snowmobile message. In three of the last four years, there haven't been any snowmobile fatalities in Vilas County, so all of their work has made a huge impact.
- Mayo noted that the ATV issue has been very contentious in Vilas County, but it has been put on the communities to allow it or not. There was a lot of contention between non-motorized and motorized users but this trail user committee has helped eased some of the tension between those groups. Mayo said that one of the most important things for the trail user committee's success was the involvement of the Sheriff's Department.
- Much encouraged Vilas County to start accepting the US National Grid. Mayo is very open to it and hopes to adopt it later, as resources allow.

### **1:38 P.M. – Briefing on dog powered sports by Beth Castaldi**

- Castaldi discussed the types of dog powered sports in Wisconsin. She talked about dry land running with sled dogs and then distinguished between competitive racing: long, mid- and sprint. Sprint racing is the primary racing type in Wisconsin and primarily what is done in Langlade County. In addition to running sleds, skijoring is also popular, a sport which features dog(s) pulling skiers.
- Castaldi praised the relationship between sled dog groups and Langlade County. The groups have a five year agreement with the county to use some of the county's trails, with the clubs expected to do their own grooming and brushing, and purchase their own liability insurance. Additionally, the clubs put up and take down their signs each year.
- Langlade County is attractive to sled dog families. Many people have moved there specifically for the sled dog trails, and a lot of people travel far distances to run on their trails.
- The sled dog clubs contribute to civil society in their area, such as donating to the Humane Society and donating funds toward a K-9 unit in the Police Department. Castaldi emphasized the importance of partnerships with other user groups. For example, they run trails at Crocker Hills which are also used by equestrians. They use ATVs in the fall to help condition the dogs to sled, and they often ride with snowmobiles following up behind them for safety, or when low snow levels prevent hooking into the ground to anchor the sled.
- There are some other areas in Wisconsin where people can train their dogs, such as in Bayfield County or in the Kettle Moraine State Forest – Southern Unit or Richard Bong State Recreation Area, but Langlade County is the best.
- Brown remarked that the DNR is looking forward to work more with dog powered sports.



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### **2:29 P.M. – DNR Report**

- Brown reported that Dan Schuller, the Director of the Wisconsin State Park System, and Peter Biermeier, the Recreation, Planning and Development Chief of the WSPS, had recently retired. She announced that the DNR is undergoing a strategic alignment process, and gave updates to master planning work for [Blue Mound State Park](#), [the Southern Kettle Moraine waters](#), [the Menominee River area](#), and [the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area](#).
- Brown then recapped the work of the [Bikeways Project](#), which finished the first round of public input in late spring. Many comments were received from almost every county in the state. Currently, they are trying to narrow down draft routes. The second round of public input will be held this upcoming fall. The Wikimap tool will be utilized again.
- Brown noted some changes to WSPS and to State Trails from the recently passed budget, including an increase in camping fees (effective July 18, 2015) and an increase in fees for State Trail and State Park passes (effective January 1, 2016). Additionally, the budget included language that could temporarily shut down trails if logging operators find it necessary (now incorporated under [Statute 23.116](#)).

### **3:06 P.M. – Public comment**

- There were no comments from the public.

### **3:07 P.M. – Identify future agenda items**

- Much said that user group presentations for equestrians, water trails and road bicycling need to be addressed at upcoming meetings.

### **3:09 P.M. – Adjourn**

- Motion to adjourn by Johnson. Seconded by Neitzke. Meeting adjourned.